West National Technology Support Center

First Quarter Report
FY2010

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A Note from the Director

This first quarter of Fiscal Year 2010 marks the fifth full year of operations for the National Technology Support Centers. The NTSC's were established to carry out three primary functions: to provide direct technical assistance to the States; to develop new technology including maintaining national standards and references; and to provide training. As a technical Agency, we must continuously develop technical guidance and procedures that reflect the latest scientific understanding. But beyond that, we need to make it easier to carry out technically sound conservation planning. I hope you will agree that the NTSC's have been a sound investment for the Agency.

Our direct assistance workload continues to increase. Most of our technical specialists are approaching being fully scheduled for this year. As it is a tight year for travel funds, I would suggest that you get technical assistance requests in sooner rather than later. In addition to our normal efforts, this year we will be concentrating on organic agriculture, energy production and conservation, and Ecological Site Descriptions.

As always, please provide feedback to us on how well we are meeting your technology and training needs. We look forward to assisting you.

- Bruce Newton

Core Team Highlights

A New Tool -- The Stream Visual Assessment Protocol Version 2. !

The Stream Visual Assessment Protocol Version 2, (SVAP2) has made its way thru the Directives System and has been placed as an amendment in the National Biology Handbook as an integral part of the Conservation Planning section, Subpart B.

The original SVAP was developed in the late 1990's and became very popular as an easy-to-use evaluation of stream conditions as well as a means by which landowners could learn about streams and how they function.

After several years of use by field personnel and applications beyond what was intended for the original SVAP, WNTSC fish biologist **Kathryn Boyer** led another national effort to modify the protocol for use in Conservation Planning and stream corridor habitat assessment for both aquatic and riparian species. The Revision Team included field conservationists, state and regional biologists, engineers, geomorphologists, and water quality specialists from around the country.

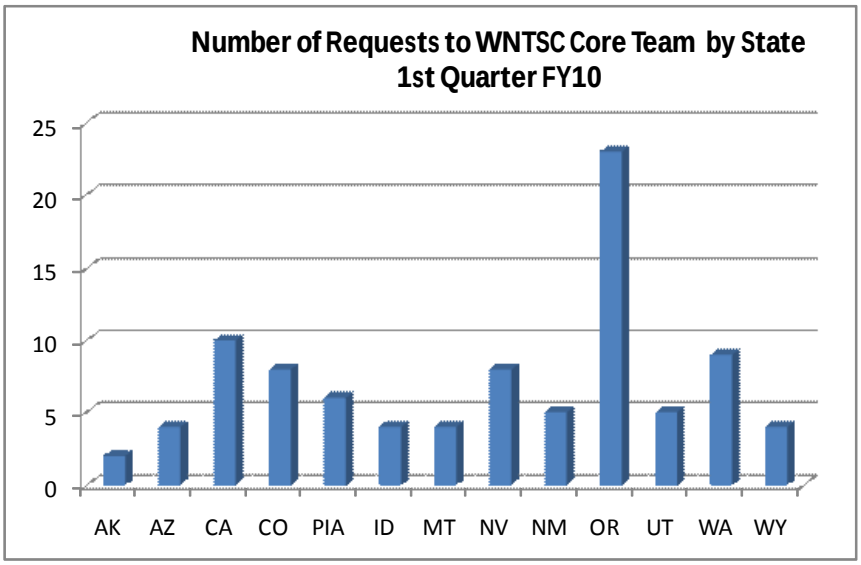
The protocol was field tested in an agreement with Oregon State University and reviewed by state biologists across the country. It was found to be relatively simple, reproducible by multiple users, and comparable to other protocols being used in the US to evaluate stream quality. By walking along and in a stream, and evaluating up to 16 metrics, planners can determine a single final score as well as how close a stream and its riparian corridor come to meeting quality criteria for stream corridor dependent species.

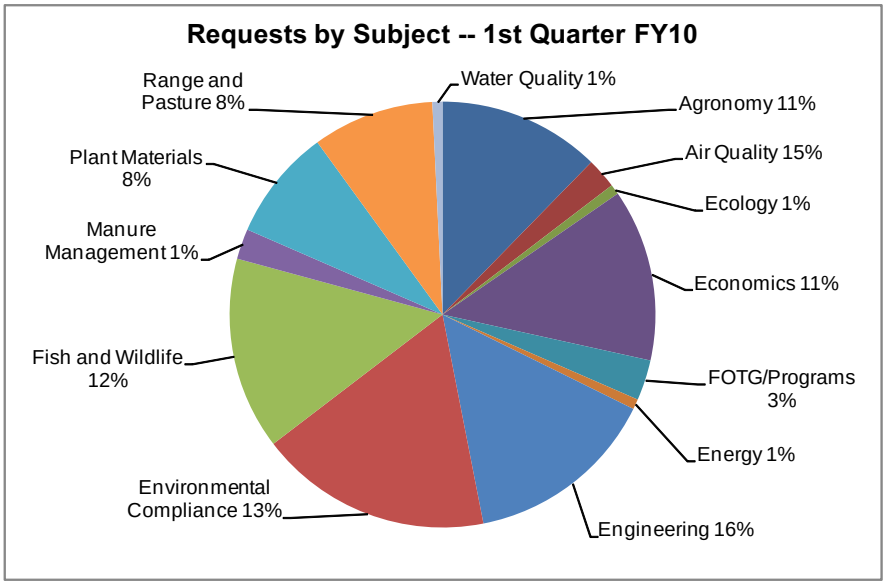
Continued on page 4

An Analysis of WNTSC Assistance
First Quarter FY2010

FY10 1st Qtr WNTSC Requests			
Requested	In Progress	Ongoing	Completed
130	107	16	103

Includes requests to Core Team and National Technology Development Teams



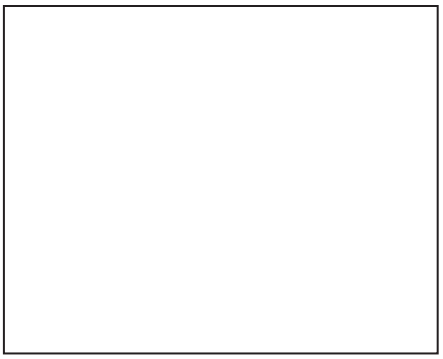


For more information or to track a specific request, visit the Assistance Tracker web site at http://ssiapps.sc.egov.usda.gov/RequestTracker/Default.aspx or contact Russ Hatz, WNTSC national techology specialist, 503-273-2428.

Helping People Help the Land

ESD's Give Clues to Cooperative Relationships

Conservationists are working on the development of Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD's) for the Blue Oak Woodlands in the foothills bordering the western Central Valley in California. Kendra Moseley, rangeland ecologist; Thomas Moore, biologist; and ACES specialists Glenn Wilcox and Lyn Townsend (former WNTSC forester) are updating site descriptions in an effort to make them available to over 20 field offices in the area.



Specialists study areas for interactions between wildlife, plants, and man.

Wendell Gilgert, WNTSC wildlife biologist, is providing assistance in exploring and understanding the mechanisms of animal interactions that influence changes in the site or the community phase, particularly those caused or facilitated by native wildlife. For example, in this area, it appears that scrub jays are largely responsible for "planting the acorns" that enable regeneration of blue oak. Without the jays, there are few other natural mechanisms that allow this planting to occur. Since these particular birds rely on native shrubs for their habitat, the removal of shrubs greatly reduces the opportunity for regeneration. Removing brush to create more forage for livestock may greatly reduce the chances of establishing future generations of the oaks.

The addition of this subtle but important ecological interaction information in ESD's provides essential decision support, risk assessment, and performance criteria for field planners in providing guidance to land managers as they plan, apply, and manage their natural resources.

Geomorphic Analysis Assists in Development of Riparian ESD's

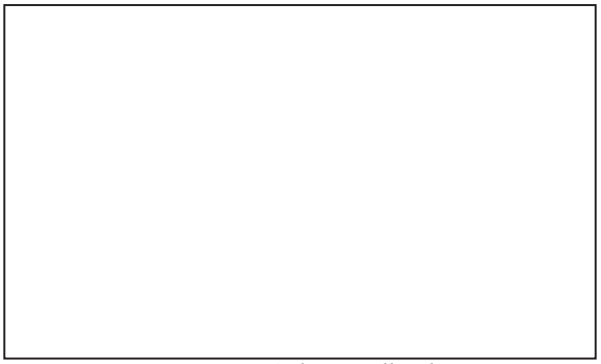
WNTSC grazing management specialist **Gene Fults** recently spent time assisting Colorado in the development of their riparian ESDs through the use of a geomorphic analysis process.

Valley landforms result from the weathering of geologic formations by a given climate regime and are a major

Color elevation map

factor in determining how to delineate ESD boundaries. Valleys with similar characteristics produce a grouping of streams and riparian areas that can be predicted to occur based on the properties of the valley landform.

Using the Arikaree River Valley for their analysis, Fults showed the Colorado NRCS employees how to do the analysis and use it to determine the beginning and end points of the riparian ecological site, locate the ESD modal areas for on-site investigations, and stratify local streams.



Arikaree Valley drainage pattern

Fults reports that using this protocol as a scoping tool will identify important structural components and provide results that:

- Confirm technically experienced observations,
- Estimate the potential extent and number of sites to visit and evaluation for the ESD development workload,
- Provide geomorphic and physiographic information for inclusion in the ESD, and
- Identify potential breaks in the linear dimensions of the riparian ESD.

For more information, contact Fults at 503-273-2430 or gene.fults@por.usda.gov.

National Technology Development Team Highlights

Air Quality-Specific Practice Standards Coming Soon

The AQAC Team spent much of the 1st quarter of FY2010 finalizing three new air quality-specific practice standards. These new standards are now waiting for publication in the Federal Register and their subsequent inclusion in the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). It is expected that they will be available for full NRCS use in the next few months. The three new standards are:

Air Filtration and Scrubbing (Conservation Practice Standard 371) – This practice standard includes several technologies for removing air contaminants, including particulate matter and various gases, from structures by interception and/or collection. The technologies include:

- Inertial collection
- Fabric filters
- Electrostatic collection
- Wet scrubbers/bioscrubbers
- Adsorption
- Biofilters

Combustion System Improvement (Conservation Practice Standard 372) – This practice standard is used to improve air quality and energy efficiency through the installation, replacement, or retrofit of agricultural combustion systems such as engines, heaters, dryers, or other devices.

Dust Control on Unpaved Roads and Surfaces (Conservation Practice Standard 373) – This practice standard is used to reduce particulate matter (dust) emissions caused by vehicle and machinery traffic or wind erosion on unpaved areas through the application of dust control palliatives/amendments such as water, adhesives, salts, emulsions, etc.

New Member on the Energy Team

In October, the Energy Technology Development Team welcomed its newest member, **Curtis Framel**. Framel has 15 years of federal service with both the US Department of Energy-Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, and the Department of Interior-Bureau of Land Management. His responsibilities with the Department of Energy in both the Seattle, WA and Golden, CO offices included the coordination of national and regional energy programs including wind and solar.

Framel also worked in the State Energy Offices in both Washington and Nevada where he coordinated state energy education and outreach efforts. Framel received his Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Planning and looks forward to his work at NRCS.

Framel hit the ground running and helped deliver an Air Quality and Energy workshop in Sacramento, CA in December. Additional workshops are also scheduled. The CA training was tied to the Air Quality and Energy Training that is now available through AgLearn.

SVAP2 *continued from page 1*

Boyer has developed a powerpoint module for SVAP 2 training which can be downloaded, along with the protocol, from the NRCS Biologists Sharepoint site at: https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/st/wntsc/coreteam/Biology/Shared%20Documents/Stream%20Habitat%20Management%20and%20Assessment%20References/SVAP%20Version%202

Boyer, as well as specialists at the East and Central National Technology Support Centers, are available to assist State's with their training needs. For more information, contact Boyer at 503-273-2412, or kathryn.boyer@por.usda.gov.